

# National Indian Gaming Association Conference 2013 Phoenix, Arizona

Monday, March 25<sup>th</sup>  
General Membership meeting 9-11:30

## **Jason Giles, Executive Director, NIGA:**

Update on the construction of their headquarters in DC. When complete, they will be able to hold conferences and meetings at the headquarters instead of paying to rent space at a local hotel, saving money. Discussion was had on the topic of IRS codes and that our gaming revenue should not be taxed when giving to our citizens as assistance, no matter what the use was intended for.

## **Vice-Chairman of NIGA:**

Made remarks that we need to continue to work towards the Federal Government to recognize us as a Government and treat us that way.

## **Jacobson and Buffalo Attorney:**

Gave an update on the ICWA case and then listed off the states that should be contacting their congressmen to give them thanks for coming on board with Arizona concerning. The adoptive couple's argument is due in April and oral arguments are scheduled for April 16th in DC. The hard work is not over depending on the out-come of the Supreme Court, if it goes our way OR if the decision comes out against ICWA.

Chairman's Leadership Award Luncheon

## **The Protection and Economic Advantages of a Tribal Worker's Benefits Program Workshop 11:30-12:30pm:**

**Pat Jewell, Senior Vice-President, Risk Management, OnPoint Underwriting**

Tribes are suffering from constant attacks of our Sovereignty. An area often not addressed is the tribes rights to maintain our Jurisdiction of our employees with concerns to workman's' compensation. The issue typically stems from the States and their insurance commission offices which believe the States have jurisdiction over the tribes for WC matters. Thankfully, the courts have not interpreted it that way. Cases are still being filed in various state forums, challenging tribal immunity. In order to protect the Tribe therefore, it is imperative for each tribe to pass their own workers' compensation or Tribal Workers' Benefit ordinance.

Why consider your own TWB ordinance or code?

Creating and enacting WC Codes strengthens a Tribe's efforts to preserve sovereignty and further its self-governance and self-determination initiatives. It also allows us to exercise our sovereignty by us allowing action to be taken against the tribe in our own courts. WE make that decision, which is important in this political climate. Enacting a code would clarify what court has jurisdiction they would seek a decision of a dispute. A critical aspect would be to review the compact with the State of Michigan and the insurance requirements contained within the compact.

For example, California Tribes were mandated through their compact to buy into the state system for WC. If language is within the Michigan compact, those insurance requirements will only address the gaming side of our operations. Another example was with Gun Lake and OnPoint's analysis for the insurance to comply with the compact. It states "The Tribe must provide benefits to its employees comparable to what the state of Michigan offers under the MI employment Security Act and WC Act. 1964. Recommendations need to be made after looking at and studying the current compact negotiations. If our insurance broker can't assist with this analysis, we should consider a broker who is has knowledge on these issues.

### **Chairman's Leadership Award Luncheon**

#### **1:30-3:30 General Membership Meeting**

#### **Senator Ben Nighthorse-Campbell, President, Nighthorse Consultants**

He gave a brief update on internet gaming and IRS Tax Code. He also stated that half of the senators within the past six years are now gone and have been replaced by new senators, and over the next six, half of the Representatives will also be replaced. It will be our job to reeducate them on the need for a new tax code that will eliminate the taxation of our casino revenues that are distributed to our citizens through assistant programs. Education on internet gaming is also need as there needs to provisions in any upcoming statute legalizing any form of internet gaming for Tribal inclusion.

#### **Gaming and Beyond-Economic Opportunities in Indian Country:**

#### **Jamie Fullmer, Jay Emery, Michael Finley and Fawn Sharp**

This was a panel presentation on economic sustainability in Indian Country. Tribes have a competitive edge when it comes to doing business overseas that the US can't take advantage of. We need to start looking globally when it comes to creating income from different sources outside of our Casinos. One idea that was shared was that Turkey is huge in the leather business, 12% of the value of the cow, comes from its hide. Farming tribes are encouraged to work together to create a trade agreement with Turkey for the sale of their cattle's hides as Turkey is finding it hard to supply the world's need for leather. Turkey is the largest supplier of high quality leather used by high end markets. Diversification and Consolidation is a new term that is being used in order to create Tribal agreements when creating businesses. Bigger tribes need to help the smaller ones in becoming more financially stable in the business market.

**Native National Policy Panel:**

**Holly Cook-Macarro, Andy Ebona, Brian Cladoosby and Mark Vanarmen**

This was to discuss the need for a new Obama Executive Order concerning Native Nations Policy, as he is working currently under the order that was created by President Clinton. They are seeking for a new one that will strengthen our "Government to Government" relationship. Obama has made Gay Rights a priority and it is being pushed right now, President Obama has power to make the changes that need to happen, he just needs to focus some of his efforts to Indian Country by implementing a strong Native Nations Policy.

**Meeting with Rochanne Hackett, Managing Director of Wells Fargo Indian Gaming 4:30PM:**

We all were able to sit down and meet Rochanne and her co-worker, Stephen Buntin, from Wells Fargo, concerning our future goals of refinancing and where we are in the process. Unfortunately, we had no updates to give as we are still working on starting the legislative process in moving forward to refinance. They were very nice and very interested in getting to know us and the area of Michigan.

**Cultural Event and Sovereign Finance Event**

I was able to again, meet Matt Eden, Vice President from Sovereign Finance. We were able to discuss with him where we are at in the process of progressing towards refinancing.

**Tuesday****10:00 – 12:15 pm Convention Floor:**

I walked the floor with both John and Kevin in order to obtain information from vendors. Had a chance to talk to WMS, Cottingham & Butler, Momentum Procurement Group, Tribal Financial Advisors,

**12:30-2:00 Lunch meeting with Clayton Vanderpool, Vice President Native American Gaming Group, PNC Bank.**

We all met with three gentlemen from PNC to discuss our goals and progression working towards refinancing our debt. They were very friendly and already have a working knowledge of our properties and debt needs.

**General Membership Meeting 2:00-4:00**

Final nominations and elections were held for President and Secretary of NIGA. Since no one was running against current positions, the election was just a formality. I walked in and out of this meeting as there was very little attendance during this session. I believe that everyone was either in other workshops or attending the convention taking place at the same time. I was able to meet with Courtney Monteiro for a bit to discuss some of our upcoming decisions concerning our future endeavors with his company. I had a very valuable conversation and am glad that I was able to have that informal conversation as lunch meetings have a way of being more stifling.

### Key Ideas from NIGA 2013

- Need for Tax reform
- Internet Gaming education in DC
- Economic Diversification
  - Diversification and Consolidation

I would like to thank that Council for allowing me to attend this year's National Indian Gaming Association Conference/Convention. Again, I believe it to be an important part of being a Council member. We need to keep an eye on activities at the National level as well as the local level. If we continue to attend these and other important conferences, we have a greater ability to serve our community without "recreating the wheel." One can really learn a lot by meeting other council members/Chairs/Vice Chairs from other tribes, you never know when you may be able to bring back the next big idea. I was approached by several tribal leaders inquiring about our recent Marriage Statute, all wanted a copy so they could take it home and push for the same legislation in their area. It was awesome to see such nationwide support for what we have done here in Michigan, Indian Country IS watching and they are taking notice of our progression! We should be proud! Again, chi-Miigwetch!

Belinda Bardwell

Tribal Councilor for the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians